

**Listing of Claims**

1. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for surveying a user with a tailored sequence of questions, comprising the steps of:

5       presenting a segment of the sequence of questions to said user, the user answers to said segment ~~being pertinent in~~ determining an affinity of said user to at least one or more affinity groups, wherein each said affinity group comprises a plurality of profiles;

10       creating a profile for said user if a profile does not exist for said user, otherwise accessing an existing profile for said user, and or adding said segment of questions and corresponding answers to said the user profile for said user;

15       ~~performing at least one of~~ associating said user profile to with at least one or more affinity groups, based on said user's profile questions and corresponding answers; ~~and if an appropriate affinity group does not exist, then~~ creating at least one at least one new affinity group and associating said user profile with said new affinity group;

20       ~~causing presenting a particular~~ subsequent segment of said sequence of questions ~~to be presented to said user, the selection of said subsequent segment to be influenced by~~ answer received to a previously presented questions in said sequence of questions and a particular affinity group or combination of affinity groups to which said user profile is associated by said method;

25       ~~optionally repeating the steps above until all possible questions of said sequence of questions have been presented to and answered by said user; and,~~ storing said user profile;

30       at least one of the questions being pertinent to at least one of compensation, benefits, wages, and economic analysis.

2. (previously amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said segment of a sequence of questions is comprised of a set comprising at least one question group that forms a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

3. ( cancelled)

4. (previously amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein said at least  
5 subsequent segment of said sequence of questions is presented because of at  
least one of:

popularity of said subsequent segment within said affinity group;

as a most frequently answered subsequent segment within said affinity  
group;

10 as a most recently answered subsequent segment within said affinity  
group; and

with regard to a defined relation to at least a segment that was presented  
prior to said subsequent segment.

15 5. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one question is  
capable of receiving an answer that comprises an open text.

6. (previously presented) The method of Claim 5, wherein said open text allows  
said user to add a new answer value for said question.

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7. (previously presented) The method of Claim 6, wherein said new answer is  
used as one of a plurality of possible answers to said question when said  
question is subsequently posed to a second user.

25 8. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein a question comprises  
at least two possible answers.

9. (original) The method of Claim 8, wherein said user may select more than one  
answer to said question.

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10. (original) The method of Claim 8, wherein said at least two possible answers  
are presented because of at least one of:

popularity of an answer within said affinity group;  
as a defined relation to said at least one question;  
as a most frequent answer within said affinity group; and  
as a most recent answer within said affinity group.

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11. (previously presented) The method of Claim 1, wherein said method further comprises the step of:

filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria.

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12. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:

real-time; and  
batch mode.

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13. (original) The method of Claim 11, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:

modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:

predetermined criterion;

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at least one filtering rule;

consistency with previously answered questions;

consistency with all answered questions; and

consistency with answers of said affinity group.

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14. (previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein said modification comprises at least one of omission of said answer, and tagging said user profile as inactive.

15. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

periodically creating a new affinity group; and  
associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

16. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

5 a user creating a new affinity group.

17. (original) The method of Claim 16, further comprising the step of:

associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

18. (original) The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of:

10 providing a report.

19. (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein generation of said report is  
constrained by at least one of:

15 an attribute of said user profile; and

a reporting goal.

20. (original) The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal comprises at least one  
of:

20 a profile attribute value;

a range of profile attribute values;

a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;

a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;

a date range;

25 a minimum count of matching profiles;

a maximum count of matching profiles;

a question filter;

an affinity filter; and

a match score threshold.

30 21. (original) The method of Claim 19, further comprising the step of:

weighting said constraints to provide a match score.

22. (previously presented) The method of Claim 19, said step of providing said report comprising the steps of:

5            matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding matchfield of at least one of an affinity group and a user profile, and  
             generating a match score.

23. (original) The method of Claim 22, further comprising the step of:

10            determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.

24. (original) The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:

             arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

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25. (original) The method of Claim 22, said step of matching further comprising the step of:

             providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and  
             weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

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26. (previously presented) The method of Claim 24, said step of matching further comprising the step of:

             classifying each match score as one of:  
                     deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
25                non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

27. (original) The method of Claim 19, wherein said goal is any of:

             a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

30            an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

28. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

5 29. (original) The method of Claim 27, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal comprises:

a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

a plurality of user profiles; and

an affinity group.

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30. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for performing a compensation survey of a user with a user tailored sequence of questions, comprising the steps of:

presenting ~~at least~~ a segment of the sequence of questions to said user,

15 the user answers to said segment ~~being pertinent in~~ determining an affinity of said user to compensation within an one or more affinity group, wherein said each affinity group comprises a plurality of profiles, each of said profiles comprising a plurality of segments of questions and corresponding answers;

creating a user profile for said user if a profile does not exist for said user,  
20 otherwise accessing an existing profile for said user, and or adding said segment of questions and corresponding answers of said user to the said user profile for  
~~said user based on said user's answers to said segment, wherein said user profile is comprised of said sequence of questions and corresponding answers;~~

~~performing at least one of~~ associating said user profile ~~to at least with at~~  
25 least one or more existing affinity groups, and based on user's profile questions and corresponding answers; if an appropriate affinity group does not exist, then  
creating at least one new affinity group and associating said user profile with said new affinity group;

presenting a particular subsequent segment of said sequence of questions  
30 to said user, the selection of said subsequent segment being influenced a particular ~~by at least one of an answer received to a previously presented~~

~~question in said sequence of questions and an affinity group or combination of~~  
affinity groups to which said user profile is ~~correlated~~ associated by said method;

optionally repeating the steps above until all possible questions of said  
sequence of questions have been presented to and answered by said user; and

5 storing said user profile.

31. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein a segment of a  
sequence of questions is comprised of a set comprising at least one question  
group forming a logical grouping of question fields into a single record.

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32. (cancelled)

33. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein said at least  
15 subsequent segment of said sequence of questions is presented because of at  
least one of:

popularity of said subsequent segment within said affinity group;

as a most frequently answered subsequent segment within said affinity  
group;

20 as a most recently answered subsequent segment within said affinity  
group; and

with regard to a defined relation to said at least a segment.

34. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein at least one  
25 question is capable of receiving an answer that comprises an open text.

35. (previously presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein said open text  
allows said user to add a new answer value to said at least one question.

36. (previously presented) The method of Claim 35, wherein said new answer is used as one of a plurality of possible answers to said question when said question is subsequently posed to a second user.

5 37. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein a question comprises at least two possible answers.

38. (original) The method of Claim 37, wherein said user may select more than one answer to said question.

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39. (original) The method of Claim 37, wherein said at least two possible answers are presented because of at least one of:

- popularity of an answer within said affinity group;
- as a defined relation to said at least one question;
- 15 as a most frequent answer within said affinity group; and
- as a most recent answer within said affinity group.

40. (previously presented) The method of Claim 30, wherein said method further comprises the step of:

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filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of predefined criteria.

41. (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step is performed in at least one of:

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- real-time; and
- batch mode.

42. (original) The method of Claim 40, wherein said filtering step further comprises the step of:

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- modifying an answer to said question based on at least one of:
  - predetermined criterion;



at least one filtering rule;  
consistency with previously answered questions;  
consistency with all answered questions; and  
consistency with answers of said affinity group.

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43. (previously presented) The method of claim 42, wherein said modification comprises at least one of omission of said answer and tagging said user profile as inactive.

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44. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the steps of:  
periodically creating a new affinity group; and  
associating at least one user to said new affinity group.

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45. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:  
a user creating a new affinity group.

46. (original) The method of Claim 45, further comprising the step of:  
associating matching user profiles with said new affinity group.

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47. (original) The method of Claim 30, wherein said affinity group comprises at least one of:

profession;  
geographic location;  
compensation;  
compensation range;  
experience;  
experience range;  
position; and  
position range.

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48. (original) The method of Claim 30, further comprising the step of:  
providing a compensation report.

49. (original) The method of Claim 48, said compensation report is constrained  
5 by at least one of:  
an attribute of said user profile; and  
a reporting goal.

50. (original) The method of Claim 49, further comprising the step of:  
10 weighting said constraint to provide a match score.

51. (original) The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising at least one of:  
a desired compensation;  
a desired range of compensation;  
15 a desired geographic location;  
a desired firm; and  
a desired range of firms.

52. (original) The method of Claim 49, said step of providing said report,  
20 comprising the step of:  
matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding  
matchfield of at least one of:  
an affinity group; and  
a user profile.

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53. (original) The method of Claim 52 further comprising the step of:  
determining at least one best match from a plurality of possible matches.

54. (original) The method of Claim 53, further comprising the step of:  
30 arranging matches by order of match score, said order being grouped to at  
least two levels of matches, based on said score.

55. (original) The method of Claim 52, said step of matching further comprising the steps of:

providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and  
5 weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

56. (original) The method of claim 55, said step of matching further comprising the step of:

classifying each match score as one of:

10 deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

57. (original) The method of Claim 49, said goal comprising any of:

15 a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and  
an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

58. (original) The method of Claim 57, said personal goal comprising at least one  
20 of:

compensation;  
compensation range;  
salary;  
salary range;  
25 geographic location;  
position; and  
position range.

59. (original) The method of Claim 57, wherein said aggregated information  
30 comprises statistical information.

60. (original) The method of Claim 59, wherein said statistical information comprises at least one of:

average compensation;

average salary;

5 median compensation;

median salary;

salary percentile;

standard deviation;

trend;

10 profile count;

most frequent compensation; and

most frequent salary.

61. (original) The method of Claim 57, said report resulting from said personal goal providing a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

a plurality of user profiles; and

an affinity group.

62. (original) The method of Claim 30, said compensation comprising at least one of:

annual salary;

monthly salary;

weekly salary;

hourly rate;

25 bonus;

tip;

benefits; and

vacation time.

30 63. (currently amended) An apparatus for compensation surveying and reporting by presenting a tailored sequence of questions to a user, comprising:

means for accessing a Web site, said Web site being accessible via a network;

means for surveying the user for information pertinent for determination of compensation, said means for surveying presenting a segment of a sequence of questions to said user and, upon the user answers to said segment being used to make a determination of an affinity group of said user to one or more affinity groups, wherein each affinity group comprises a plurality of profiles, presenting a subsequent segment of said sequence of questions determined to be most suitable for said user;

means for creating a user profile for said user if a profile does not exist for a said user, otherwise accessing an existing profile for said user, and adding said segment of questions and corresponding answers to said user profile based on gathering of said information, said user profile further comprised of at least one question and at least one corresponding answer;

means for storing said user profile;

~~means for periodically generating an affinity group comprising a plurality of user profiles, the affinity group being determined as a result of a correlation between a plurality of profiles; and~~

~~means for matching an attribute of associating said user profile with at least one or more affinity groups, based on said user's profile questions and corresponding answers; if an appropriate affinity group does not exist, then creating at least one new affinity group and associating said user profile with said new affinity group.~~

64. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, further comprising:

means for selecting at least one affinity group to which said user profile best matches.

65. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said network comprising at least one of:

a local area network (LAN);  
a wide area network (WAN);  
an Intranet;  
the Internet; and  
5 the World Wide Web.

66. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, further comprising:  
means for reporting results based on a reporting goal.

10 67. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 66, said means for reporting further comprising:  
means for matching between at least a matchfield of said goal and a corresponding matchfield of at least one of:  
an affinity group; and  
15 a user profile.

68. (original) The apparatus of Claim 67, said means for matching further comprising:  
means for classifying each match score as one of:  
20 deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

69. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, said reporting goal comprising at least one of:  
25 salary range;  
hourly rate range;  
billing rate;  
vacation range;  
commission range;

stock option packages;  
tips;  
benefits comparison; and  
total compensation calculations.

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70. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, said affinity group comprising at least one of:

industry;  
job;  
profession;  
geographic location;  
compensation range;  
experience range;  
skill, certification;  
responsibility;  
employer name;  
employer type;  
employer size;  
employer sales;  
employer business;  
employer product;  
employer service;  
gender;  
age range;  
school name;  
degree;  
study major; and  
ethnic background.

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71. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, said compensation comprising at least one of:

annual salary;  
monthly salary;  
weekly salary;  
daily rate;  
5 hourly rate;  
overtime rate;  
bonus;  
tip;  
benefits;  
10 vacation time;  
stock; and  
stock options.

72. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, wherein said reporting goal comprises  
15 one of:

a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user  
inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of  
arbitrary inputs.

20 73. (original) The apparatus of Claim 72, said personal goal comprising at least  
one of:

compensation;  
compensation range;  
25 salary;  
salary range;  
geographic location;  
job position; and  
statistical information.



74. (original) The apparatus of Claim 73, said personal goal in connection with said user profile comprising:

likes of said user.

5 75. (original) The apparatus of Claim 73, said personal goal in connection with said affinity group comprising:

a user profile comprising likes of said user.

10 76. (original) The apparatus of Claim 66, wherein said reporting goal provides aggregated information pertaining to a plurality of user profiles.

77. (original) The apparatus of Claim 76, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

15 78. (original) The apparatus of Claim 77, said statistical information comprising at least one of:

average compensation;

average salary;

median compensation;

20 median salary;

salary percentile;

standard deviation;

trend;

profile count;

25 most frequent compensation; and

most frequent salary.

79. (cancelled)

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80. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein a question from said sequence of questions is associated with a plurality of possible answers.

5 81. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 80, wherein said possible answers are a subset of a plurality of answers, wherein said subset being selected at least in respect of at least one of said user profile, and an affinity group associated with said user profile.

10 82. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein said user may select at least one answer to said question.

83. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, said possible answers further comprising:  
an open text.

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84. (original) The apparatus of Claim 83, said open text allowing said user to add a new answer to said possible answers.

20 85. (original) The apparatus of Claim 84, wherein said new answer is used as one of said possible answers when a question is subsequently suggested to a second user.

25 86. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein a subsequent question is selected for presentation to said user from a plurality of possible questions.

87. (original) The apparatus of Claim 86, wherein said selection from a plurality of possible question is tailored to correspond with said user profile.

30 88. (original) The apparatus of Claim 81, wherein upon selection of an answer by said user, said user profile is associated with an affinity group.

89. (previously presented) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said means for surveying enable said user to add a new question.

5 90. (original) The apparatus of Claim 89, wherein said user may add a new answer to said question.

91. (original) The apparatus of Claim 63, wherein said affinity groups are created based on at least a commonality between at least one attribute and at least one  
10 corresponding value.

92. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for surveying a user with using survey a sequence of questions tailored to a said user, comprising the steps of:

15 ~~asking a presenting a segment of the sequence of questions from the~~  
~~to said~~ user, the user answers to said segment question being pertinent to the  
~~determination of~~ determining an affinity of said user to compensation within one  
or more affinity groups, wherein each affinity group comprises a plurality of  
profiles of said user;

20 receiving an answers from said user;

storing said ~~first question segment~~ and said answers in a user profile  
~~respective of said user;~~

~~adding associating~~ said user profile ~~to at least~~ with one or more existing  
matching affinity groups, based on said user's profile questions and  
25 corresponding answers; if an appropriate affinity group does not exist, then  
creating at least one new affinity group and associating said user profile with said  
new affinity group the affinity group being determined as a result of a correlation  
between a plurality of profiles;

optionally filtering said user profile, wherein said filtering comprises the  
30 application of a rules engine that compares said user profile to a set of  
predefined criteria;

modifying an answer if it is inconsistent with at least one of:

said user profile; and

said affinity group;

determining an appropriate next question to be presented to said user,

5 said appropriate question being determined based on at least one of said matching affinity group and an answer to a previously presented question; and

repeating the foregoing steps until a full profile is established.

10 93. (previously presented) The method of claim 92, further comprising the steps of:

at least periodically checking all user profiles; and

attempting to generate at least an affinity group, wherein said affinity group comprises at least a user profile.

15 94. (original) The method of Claim 92, further comprising the step of:

preparing a report based on at least one of:

an attribute of said user profile; and

a reporting goal.

20 95. (currently amended) The method of Claim 92, wherein said step of optionally filtering said user profile is performed in an off-line mode.

96. (original) The method of Claim 92, wherein said appropriate next question is determined based on at least one of:

25 popularity of said question within said affinity group;

a defined relation to said at least one question;

a most frequently answered question within said affinity group;

a most recently answered question within said affinity group; and

in relation to said question.

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97. (original) The method of Claim 94, further comprising the step of:

querying any of a database of a plurality of user profiles and a database of a plurality of affinity groups for a statistical report.

98. (original) The method of Claim 97, wherein said statistical report comprises at least one of:

average compensation;  
average salary;  
median compensation;  
median salary;  
salary percentile;  
standard deviation;  
trend;  
profile count;  
most frequent compensation; and  
most frequent salary.

99. (original) The method of Claim 98, further comprising the step of:  
generating said statistical report with at least one of said attributes held constant.

100. (original) The method of Claim 94, said generating step further comprising the step of:

constraining by at least one of:  
an attribute of said user profile; and  
a goal.

101. (original) The method of Claim 100, wherein said goal comprises at least one of:

a profile attribute value;  
a range of profile attribute values;  
a Boolean value reflective of a set of values;

a Boolean value reflective of a set of non-values;  
a date range, a minimum count of matching profiles;  
a maximum count of matching profiles;  
a question filter;  
5 an affinity filter; and  
a match score threshold.

102. (original) The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:  
weighting said constraint results to provide a match score.

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103. (original) The method of Claim 100, further comprising the step of:  
determining a best match from a plurality of possible matches.

104. (original) The method of Claim 103, further comprising the step of:

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arranging said match by order of match score, said order being grouped to  
at least two levels of matches, based on said score.

105. (original) The method of Claim 100, said matching step further comprising  
the steps of:

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providing an aggregated score for said matching step; and  
weighting the importance of including said match in said report.

106. (original) The method of Claim 100, said step of matching to said affinity  
group further comprising the step of:

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classifying each match score as one of:  
deterministic to meeting said goal; and  
non-deterministic to meeting said goal.

107. (original) The method of Claim 100, said goal comprising one of:

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a personal goal, wherein said personal goal is a result of a plurality of user  
inputs pertaining to personal aspirations; and

an external goal, wherein said external goal is a result of a plurality of arbitrary inputs.

5 108. (original) The method of Claim 107, wherein said aggregated information comprises statistical information.

109. (original) The method of Claim 108, wherein said statistical information comprises at least one of:

10       average compensation;  
      average salary;  
      median compensation;  
      median salary;  
      salary percentile;  
      standard deviation;  
15       trend;  
      profile count;  
      most frequent compensation; and  
      most frequent salary.

20 110. (original) The method of Claim 107, wherein a report resulting from a personal goal provides a comparison of a user having said user profile to at least one of:

      a plurality of user profiles; and  
      an affinity group.

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